(NITs) and State Government were requested to give their consent for the proposed changes. Out of 17 RECs, in the first phase RECs situated at Allahabad, Bhopal, Calicut, Hamirpur, Jaipur, Nagpur, Kurukshetra, Rourkela, Silchar and Surathkal were convered into National Institutes of Technology because the concerned State Governments agreed to change the management structure of the Concerned RECs. This initiative will translate into enhanced funding for the new NITs and improved management of their affairs. This transformation will result in greater adminsitrative, academic and financial autonomy to the newly converted Institutes which, in turn, is expected to enhance their level of education. After concurrence of the concerned State Governments is received, the remaining RECs shall also be converted into NITs. The new NITs will be able to impart, in the near future, technical education of comparable quality to nearly 7000 aspirants as is being provided by other nationals level institutions. These NITs shall be managed by their Board of Governors. In additions to that, Council of National Institute of Technology shall coordinate the activities of all the NITs.

Forests cover in North-Eastern States

*194. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONEMNT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the percentage of forest cover in Assam and in other North-Eastern States;

(b) what are the reasons for not taking into account the tea gardens in Assam, full of trees, as forest cover;

(c) the reasons for which the people in that State, settled in the forest areas even before Independenance, are being evicted; and

(d) whether his Ministry would suggest the Assam Government to rehabilitate such evicted people?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) According to the State of Forests Report 1999, the percentage of forest cover in Assam and in other North-Eastern States with respect to geographical area is as under:

(i)	Assam	30.20%
(ii)	Arunachal Pradesh	82.21%
(iii)	Manipur	77.86%

(iv)	Meghalaya	69.70%
(v)	Mizoram	86.99%
(vi)	Nagaland	85.43%
(vii)	Tripura	54.79%

(b) Tea Garden is not included in assessing the forest cover by Forest Survey of India as this is considered to be non-forest land use.

(c) Such evictions are resorted to clear the forest land of unauthorised encroachments. The State Government of Assam has informed that no legally settled people are being evicted.

(d) No such proposal is under consideration.

Allotment of Forest Land

*195. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Andhra Pradesh Government has allotted forest lands to private industries, in violation of National Forest Policy and Joint Forest Management guidelines, issued by the Central Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what action Government have taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c) The State Government of Andhra Pradesh in its Government Order No.112 dated 22.09.2000 has in-principle agreed to a tripartite agreement amongst the Vana Samrakshana Samities, industry and Government of Andhra Pradesh for meeting the demand of forest-based raw material by regenerating the degraded forest areas through Vana Samrakshana Samities.

As this arrangement is not in conformity with the National Forest Policy, 1988 and the principles of Joint Forest Management, the State Government was advised not to go ahead with the proposal.

Train between Anandpur Saheb and Amritsar

*196. SHRI KARTAR SINGH DUGGAL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had assured during the Tricentenary